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ABSTRACT

This guide provides information on the life and trial of Nazi Gestapo chief Adolf Eichmann. The guide includes suggested activities, discussion questions, suggested readings, a list of key players of the era, a vocabulary list, and a list of components and key events tied to "The New York Times" of the era. (EH)

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The Trial of Adolf Eichmann, 1961: Educator's Guide. Live from the Past Series.

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1

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Educator's GUIDE

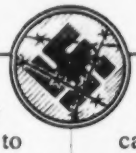
The New York Times Live FROM THE PAST

The Trial of Adolf Eichmann, 1961

To the public during World War II, Adolf Eichmann was a relatively little-known figure in Hitler's Third Reich, but he flourished under the Nazi regime. He belonged to all three Nazi organizations created to terrorize Jews and other "undesirables": the S.S. (Elite Guard), the S.D. (State Security Service) and the Gestapo (Security Police). Eichmann's first assignment was to organize the forced emigration of Jews from Vienna. His methods there were considered so successful, they were later used in Berlin and again in France. Eichmann would eventually become chief of the Gestapo's Jewish Affairs Section of the dreaded Reich Security Office. He was responsible for the transport of Jews from the ghettos to concentration camps.

When the war ended, Eichmann was detained by Americans in a prisoner of war camp where his identity was unknown. He escaped from the camp and, with the help of the ex-Nazi underground, made his way to Austria and then Italy. He obtained false papers and an Argentine visa. He traveled under the name of Ricardo Klement, and in August 1950 settled near Buenos Aires as Klement. He found a job and made contact with the German community. His wife, Veronica, left Austria in 1952 to join her husband. It was her departure that enabled the Israeli secret police to find Klement. But police, who had only a photograph of Eichmann that was a quarter of a century old for identification, could not be sure the man they were following was the Nazi chief they were looking for.

THE HOLOCAUST



Eichmann found a job at a Mercedes Benz factory in a suburb of Buenos Aires. The Israeli secret police monitored Eichmann from the moment he left his house in the morning to his return at night. One night, Eichmann did not follow his usual routine; he stopped at a florist shop, purchased a bouquet and then went home. That night the Israelis sent a cable: "THE MAN IS THE MAN." The Israelis knew that this day was the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of Adolf Eichmann and Veronica Liebl.

After this confirmation of Eichmann's identity, the Israelis had to arrest him. But this was Argentina and the only road to justice seemed to be to bring him to Israel. On May 11, 1960, Eichmann stepped off the bus on his way home from work. He was stopped by four Israelis and taken to a house guarded by armed men. When questioned, he admitted his true identity. Twelve days later the Israeli Parliament was stunned into silence when Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion announced that the "greatest of Nazi war criminals, Adolf Eichmann, has been found and is already under arrest in Israel."

Eichmann was brought to trial under the Israeli Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Law of 1950. The trial began with a legal battle between the Israeli prosecutor, Gideon Hausner, and Eichmann's defense attorney, Robert Servatius, who also served as defense attorney at the Nuremberg trials. They argued over Israel's right to bring Eichmann to Israel to stand trial and its right to try him at all. The Israeli tribunal ruled that Eichmann would have met justice at Nuremberg but that court had been dissolved. Now Israel, home of hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors, claimed the right to try Eichmann in the name of mankind.

Eichmann was indicted on fifteen counts of crimes against humanity and complicity in the murder of 6,000,000 Jews. The prosecutor acknowledged that he knew of only one case in which Eichmann killed a Jew with his own hands. Still, he argued, Eichmann was responsible for the deaths of the Jews he deported to the concentration camps. Eichmann's main defense was that one man cannot be held accountable for the actions of a state. Other than Hitler, no one man was the architect of the Holocaust, but Adolf Eichmann was central to its task. On December 11, 1961, Eichmann was found guilty and later sentenced to be hanged. He appealed and lost and became the first and only man in Israeli history to be executed for his crimes. Eichmann was the last of the core Nazis to be tried. The Israelis and private groups of Holocaust survivors have persisted in their search for war criminals to make them answerable for their crimes. The trials of former Nazis continue to remind the world about the need to instill the lessons of personal responsibility and morality into all its citizens.

module 3

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Suggested Activities

✻ *Conduct a role-playing exercise that has students acting as Hausner and Servatius arguing over Israel's right to try Eichmann. Two students can play Hausner and two can play Servatius. Three students will be the tribunal who will ask questions of the attorneys. The rest of the class can write a short essay summarizing the arguments of each side. Use the video and the following articles to help students in their role-playing:*

"Trial of Eichmann Opens Before Israeli Tribunal"
"Israel Defends Tribunal's Right to Try Eichmann"
"Eichmann: Impact on Germany"
"Hausner Attacks Eichmann's Plea"

✻ *Have students prepare a "Readers' Theater Presentation" of the counts of the indictment against Eichmann. Some of the performance elements that could be included are:*

1. *contemporary or traditional music that lends dramatic flavor to the reading.*
2. *a person playing Eichmann listening as described in the articles and in the pictures.*
3. *a collage of the headlines that focus on the details of the counts of the indictment.*
4. *a collage of pictures that contribute to the reading.*

✻ *Using the article "Eichmann: Impact on Germany," have students discuss the statement made by a German student: "We are not responsible for what our parents did." Lead a discussion about the responsibility of the present generation to learn about the Holocaust.*

✻ *Direct students to read "Excerpts from Israeli Judgment Convicting Eichmann of Crimes Against Humanity." Ask students to compile a list of what they think are "crimes against humanity." A class discussion can be developed around questions such as: How are "crimes against humanity" defined? Is there such a thing as "crimes against humanity"? Why or why not?*

✻ *Have students contact Holocaust museums or organizations around the country. Ask them to request information about the Holocaust. Using the information in this module and the additional research, have them organize a Holocaust remembrance day. Exhibits can be designed to help fellow students understand the full extent of the impact of the Holocaust.*

Using the Components

Educator's Guide:

✻ Use the guide as a time-saving reference before a lecture or when preparing a lesson plan.

✻ Copy portions of the guide to hand out to students. If there is not enough time to cover the unit in detail, the introduction, vocabulary, list of players, or discussion questions can help students to grasp the concepts quickly.

Poster:

✻ Display the poster several days before beginning the unit to stimulate student inquiries and anticipation for the subject topic.

✻ Use the poster on the first day of the unit to foster an opening discussion to prime students for in-depth study or discussion later on in the unit.

✻ Punctuate an event's importance by using the poster only on the day the front page appeared chronologically in the order of events.

Video:

✻ Provide an overview of the events by showing the video at the beginning of the unit.

✻ Summarize the issues studied by showing the video at the end of the unit.

✻ Stimulate topics for independent research by displaying the video, and then direct the students to search among a variety of sources to narrow their own related topics.

Article Sheets:

✻ Select, copy and hand out only the articles best suited to fill the gaps in the textbook information or to help highlight the day's lecture topic.

✻ Copy all the article sheets into one packet and provide to the students as a research resource to answer questions, develop essays or to prepare presentations.

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Discussion Questions

1. What arguments did Servatius use to support his claim that Israel had no right to try Eichmann? How did Hausner justify Israel's position of the right to try Eichmann? Which argument do you agree with? Why?
2. Why did Hausner say that Eichmann was crueler than Himmler? Did he prove his point? Why or why not?
3. What did Eichmann mean when he said, "In the sense of the indictment, not guilty"?
4. Was it an adequate defense to say that Eichmann was a mere "cog" in a machine? To what extent do you think he was responsible for his actions? Why?
5. According to the article "Eichmann: Impact on Germany," Germans were ashamed of what they heard about the trial but felt little personal guilt. To what extent should there be personal guilt about the crimes Eichmann was accused of?
6. What did the trial reveal about the Nazis' program of extermination against the Jews? What did the trial reveal about the people who implemented the Holocaust?
7. What did the trial reveal about Adolf Eichmann? What information helps you to form your conclusions about Eichmann's character?
8. Do you think Eichmann's judges—all European Jews before they came to Israel—should have been allowed to preside over the trial? Why or why not?
9. Was the trial of Eichmann an act of revenge or justice? Justify your reasoning.
10. Eichmann's trial reviewed the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jewish people. It also developed the question of personal responsibility for one's actions. Do you think the individual is responsible for his or her own actions, or do you agree with Eichmann's argument that he was just "following orders"?

Suggested Reading

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,
by Hannah Arendt. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

The Face of the Third Reich,
by Joachim Fest. New York: Pantheon Press, 1970.

Out of the Whirlwind,
by Albert Freidlander, ed. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

Justice in Jerusalem,
by Gideon Hausner. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

The Capture and Trial of Adolf Eichmann,
by Moshe Perlman. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.

Nuremberg: Infamy on Trial,
by Joseph Persico. New York: Viking, 1994.

And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight: The Eichmann Trial, the Jewish Catastrophe and Hannah Arendt's Narrative,
by Jacob Robinson. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.

The Sunflower,
by Simon Wiesenthal. New York: Schocken Books, 1977.

The New York Times Live FROM THE PAST

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List of Players

Adolf Eichmann *Former Nazi who headed the "Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration." It was this department that helped develop the systematic extermination of the Jewish people.*

David Ben-Gurion *One of the founders of modern Israel and its first Premier.*

Dr. Benjamin Halevi *One of three jurists at the Eichmann trial. He was a graduate of Berlin University and president of the Jerusalem District Court.*

Gideon Hausner *Chief prosecutor at the Eichmann trial.*

Heinrich Himmler *Hitler's Gestapo Chief. During the trial, Eichmann was portrayed as a more zealous anti-Semite than Himmler.*

Rudolf Hoess *Notorious Auschwitz Commandant. The prosecution claimed Eichmann worked with Hoess to perfect extermination methods at the death camp.*

Moshe Landau *Presiding judge in the Eichmann trial. He was born in Poland and educated in London.*

Veronica Liebl *Eichmann's wife, who emigrated to Argentina and inadvertently led Israeli investigators to Eichmann.*

Dr. Itzhak Raveh *One of three jurists at the Eichmann trial. He graduated from Berlin University and was a refugee who had fled Germany in 1933.*

Dr. Robert Servatius *Eichmann's defense attorney. He was also the defense counsel at the Nuremberg trials.*

VOCABULARY

ANNIHILATE
To destroy completely.

ABDUCT
To take away a person by force. The Eichmann defense claimed that Eichmann was abducted from Argentina by the Israeli government.

EX POST FACTO LAW
A law that makes an earlier act a crime even though that act was not illegal when it was committed. Eichmann's defense claimed the Israeli Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Law was not valid because Israel did not exist at the time of the Holocaust.

EXTERMINATE
To destroy or eradicate.

EXTRADITE
To give up or deliver a fugitive to the legal jurisdiction of another government.

GENOCIDE
The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political or cultural group.

HOLOCAUST
Great or total destruction, especially by fire; Holocaust was the name used for the genocide of European Jews and others by the Nazis during World War II.

INDICT
To charge with an offense.

JURISDICTION
The authority of a court to hear certain kinds of cases.

MENS REA
The establishment of criminal intent.

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCE
A circumstance that doesn't justify or excuse an offense, but which may reduce the degree of moral responsibility; a court may consider mitigating circumstances and give a defendant a lesser sentence.

TRIBUNAL
A court of justice.

WAR CRIME
Any of various crimes, including genocide or mistreating prisoners of war, committed during a war and considered a violation of the conventions of warfare.

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List of Components

(14) New York Times Articles

The article dates listed below represent the date The New York Times published the story and may differ from the dateline at the beginning of each story, which represents the day the article was filed. Some articles have been excerpted to conserve space.

"Trial of Eichmann Opens Before Israeli Tribunal," April 11, 1961.

"There Is No News From Auschwitz," April 16, 1961.

"Israel Defends Tribunal's Right to Try Eichmann," April 12, 1961.

"Eichmann: Impact on Germany," April 16, 1961.

"Eichmann: Impact on Israel," April 16, 1961.

"Hausner Attacks Eichmann's Plea," April 18, 1961.

"Eichmann Is Portrayed as Crueler Than Himmler," April 19, 1961.

"Trial of Eichmann Backed," April 16, 1961.

"Eichmann's Tape Depicts Killings," April 20, 1961.

"Eichmann Guilty; Calm at Verdict of Israeli Court," December 11, 1961.

"Excerpts From Israeli Judgment Convicting Eichmann Of Crimes Against Humanity," December 12, 1961.

"Excerpts From Concluding Section of Israeli Court's Judgment of Eichmann," December 13, 1961.

"Aftermath of Eichmann," December 17, 1961.

"Eichmann Terms Conviction Error," December 14, 1961.

(1) New York Times Front Page Poster

"Eichmann Guilty; Calm at Verdict of Israeli Court," December 11, 1961.

(1) Video Program

Videotapes may not be reproduced and are limited solely and exclusively to single classroom exhibition.

Title: The Trial of Adolf Eichmann, 1961.

Running Time: Approximately 16:00.

Contents: The video contains historical footage, still photos, background information and insightful commentary from interviews with *New York Times* reporter Ralph Blumenthal, whose reports on Nazi war criminals hiding in America were factors in their deportation and prosecution. Also appearing is Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian efforts.

Key Events

MAY 11, 1960

Eichmann is abducted by Israeli secret police near his home in Buenos Aires.

APRIL 11, 1961

Eichmann is indicted on fifteen counts under Israel's Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Law of 1950.

APRIL 12, 1961

Israel defends its right to try Eichmann.

APRIL 17, 1961

Eichmann enters a not guilty plea, responding to each of the charges, "In the sense of the indictment, not guilty."

DECEMBER 11, 1961

Eichmann is found guilty of crimes against humanity by the Israeli tribunal.

DECEMBER 13, 1961

Eichmann gives his final statement, unemotionally telling the court that he only followed orders and that he did not personally carry out any of the crimes he was accused of.

MAY 31, 1962

After his appeals were denied, Eichmann is hanged for his crimes.

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